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ABSTRACT

English teachers typically do not employ the techniques reported by research as best able to develop students' language abilities. Research studies have revealed that there is little value in engaging students in the formal study of grammar and have indicated that language learning should not be fragmented. Many techniques and instructional materials are available to help English teachers capitalize upon natural language development and child growth pattern in teaching speaking and writing skills. The basic conservatism of English teachers is shown by their insistence on teaching rigid rules for language usage; techniques have been developed to help students in English methods courses become aware that usage should not be a rigidly prescribed matter. Reports on declining student scores on college entrance tests have been believed unquestioningly by most English teachers, although very few have attempted to accumulate data on their own students; yet it is crucial that educators gather data before making curricular changes. English educators must develop procedures for producing professional educators who can translate research findings into classroom practice. (GW)

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TRANSLATING LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH FINDINGS INTO PRACTICE

The primary task of a teacher is to facilitate and encourage learning. The primary task of English teachers is to develop the language proficiencies of their students. An extensive compilation of research available to us provides the foundation and guidelines for effective language development programs. Yet, as Gordon Brossell has noted, a major weakness of English curricula is:

> the still prevalent tendency in schools to treat language solely as an object of inspection and study rather than an instrument for learning. The need for young people to use language in ever widening and increasingly differentiated social contexts remains paramount if the language learning process is to be effectively advanced.[1]

Research in language development seems to remain the interest primarily of university professors, defined by at least one teacher as "a group who train teachers in what ought to be rather than what is." In my more pessimistic moods, I am convinced that many, if not most, of today's English teachers do not want to learn the best techniques for teaching, but simply want to learn how to cope with and survive the school environment. What follows is my attempt to convince myself that my pessimism might be unwarranted.

Why haven't English teachers employed those techniques reported by research as best able to develop the language abilities of students? At the end of this paper I intend to offer solutions to what I believe to be the actual, underlying

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reasons. But for now, let us consider one possibility: that English teachers apparently are confused by seemingly contradictory claims of research.

Much confusion in the debate about English class methodologies seems to center around the use of one word, or homonym: grammar. As with so many words in the English language, grammar has many definitions. One major argument in the teaching of English revolves around whether or not a knowledge of grammar will help students become better writers.

Must students "know" grammar to write well? Certainly. In fact, they must know grammar to write poorly. Must students "study" grammar to write well? Evidently not. The apparent contradiction in those statements results from two separate definitions of "grammar." "Grammar" in the first two sentences of this paragraph refers to the natural rules of a language without which we could not communicate. In that respect, normal children naturally learn the rules of their native language by the time they are five years old although they cannot manipulate those rules as adults do or state them as formal rules. "Grammar" in the third sentence of this paragraph refers to the analyzing of sentences ("parsing" in the Nineteenth Century) and the learning of prescriptive rules. That is the "grammar" that so much research indicates to be ineffective.

Further complicating matters, if we mean "grammar" to be a description of a language, we must talk about "grammars," for there are more than one. "Traditional grammar" is actually a Latinate grammar, developed in the Eighteenth Century from Latin grammar rules because thorough rules for English had not been formulated. Thus, this Latinate grammar began frustrating native speakers of English with such rules as "never split an infinitive." A Latin infinitive is one word and therefore unsplittable. An English infinitive is two words and a joy to constantly split. Today, more accurate or more promising grammars include structural grammar, transformational-generative grammar, case grammar,

and stratificational grammar. Nevertheless, their value to the writer is limited in that their purpose is to describe language, not to prescribe techniques of effective writing. In itself, knowledge of any of these grammars will not make one a better writer. In the mid and late 1960's, English teachers were caught up in the sudden publication of books about transformational grammar. Because transformational grammar seemed to explain the workings of the English sentence so well (and all sentences in all languages, or so the Nativists hoped), it seemed to be a much more legitimate (or, as linguists say, adequate) grammar to teach students than was the old Latinate grammar. Now, we are learning that students write no better after having studied transformational grammar than they did before they studied it. Melvin J. Luthy argues:

> that transformational grammar is not a theory of rhetoric or usage or even competence in writing. And it does not provide a very extensive or consistent description of English. To the degree that it is taught, let it be to give limited insights into a marvelous system of relationships, hierarchies, categories, and functions and to help students gain appreciation for their minds and the linguistic facility they possess.[2]

Yet, these conclusions should have been apparent to English teachers at the outset. The historical compilation of research on teaching grammar seemed most conclusive.

This research record indicated that the formal study of grammar is wasteful of both teachers' and students' time, perhaps to the point of being counterproductive. A brief selection from that consistent research shows why. In 1906, F.S. Hoyt concluded, after testing students on grammar and composition, that there was as much relationship between grammar and composition as there was between grammar and any other subject and that grammar does not improve one's ability to communicate.[3]

In 1947, H. Greene reported that studies of diagramming indicated that diagramming did not improve the acquisition of English "correctness."[4] For

instance, students can diagram I ain't got none and the sentence would correctly fit the diagram. A diagram shows nothing about the appropriateness of usage. And J. Stewart's study in 1942 showed that diagramming was in no way superior to direct instruction in composition.[5] In short, diagramming teaches diagramming. Writing develops writing skills, along with a host of other techniques.

Those results were paralleled by those of C.J. Butterfield, who, in 1945, concluded that "students who were taught grammar per se learned significantly more grammar than students who were not taught grammar," but that they did not punctuate as well as students who were taught through reasoning exercises.[6] By this time, English teachers should have had little doubt about the dubious value of grammar study, but they persisted.

Then began the disturbing research, such as that of R.J. Harris in 1962. He found that "the study of English grammatical terminology had a negligible or even a relatively harmful effect upon the correctness of children's writing..."[7] More substantial, the 1975 report of W.B. Elley, I.H. Barham, H. Lamb, and M. Wyllie should be noted by all English teachers and administrators. These researchers matched groups of students and teachers in three programs, two groups studying the Oregon Curriculum, one with transformational-generative grammar and one with no grammar, the third group studying literature and traditional grammar. The researchers reported, first, "that English grammar, whether traditional or transformational, has virtually no influence on the language growth of typical secondary school students," and, most importantly, that those students who studied grammar had the most negative attitudes toward English as a subject.[8] If nothing else, the overwhelming findings of such research ought to have convinced English teachers that teaching grammar would do little to improve their students' writing and speaking skills and that other methods ought to be tried.

Complicating this is an increasing body of research and theorizing that grammarians, by concentrating upon the sentence itself, have ignored the more important elements which enable speakers to communicate to listeners and which enable writers to communicate to readers. While Chomsky depended upon the syntax itself for his attempts to explain the nature of meaning, others, such as David R. Olsen, argue that meaning develops from non-linguistic structures, not from sentence and words per se.

> The comprehension of sentences involves several different processes. Ordinary conversational speech, especially children's speech, relies for its comprehension on a wide range of information beyond that explicitly marked in language....Sentences in conversational contexts, then, are interpreted in terms of the following: agreed upon lexical and syntactic conventions; a shared knowledge of events and a preferred way of interpreting them; a shared perceptual context; and agreed upon prosodic features and paralinguistic conventions.
>
> Written languages can have no recourse to shared context, prosodic features, or paralinguistic conventions since the preserved sentences have to be understood in contexts other than those in which they were written.[9]

The teacher's task, then, becomes one of making students more aware of the necessary prerequisites and limitations for meaning to be successfully transmitted. Such techniques as language simulations, communication games, role-playing, and a multitude of writing situations are productive.

An additional argument against the fragmentation of language learning and for increased involvement with the context of the communication event is this. It becomes increasingly evident that short language sequences are harder to comprehend than longer ones.[10] Thus, the more time teachers dwell upon single words, the less time students will spend working with sentences. And the more time spent analyzing sentences, the less time spent working with paragraphs and complete stories and essays.

Perhaps related to this awareness is the resurgence of the interest in rhetoric. Armed with the tools of recent linguistic technology, rhetoricians

are providing greater insights into the task of communication. Arguing for a speech act theory that moves beyond the mere quantification of texts, W. Ross Winterowd summarizes a position which, if developed, should lead to more effective teaching strategies:[11]

> ...we will not get far with our investigation unless we take a more global view of style...Speech act theory, then, reintroduces the concept of speaker/writer with intentions and hearer/reader with idiosyncratic responses into the study of style. Style once more becomes the concern of rhetoric proper.

Depite such consistent indications, time and again teachers say, "How can our students pass college entrance tests unless they study grammar? Don't blame us--it's the colleges that require this knowledge." In actuality, college entrance tests require that students be able to recognize well-constructed and poorly-constructed sentences, not that they define grammatical terms. A teacher need only look at a sample test to know this. What teachers should be concerned about is that not all colleges require students to actually write anything as part of their entrance requirements.

More than ever before, English teachers now have available productive techniques to teach students speaking and writing skills, capitalizing upon natural language development and child growth patterns. For instance, sentence combining employs the natural processes of building and revising sentences and has been shown by the accumulated research of Bateman and Zidonis, Mellon, O'Hare, Combs,[12] and others to have a positive effect on the quality of student writing. Several textbooks on the market, such as William Strong's Sentence Combining, Frank O'Hare's Sentencecraft, and Philip DiStefano and Robert Marzano's DiComp will guide the teacher and student through productive syntax manipulation techniques. Based upon principles similar to those of Francis Christensen's earlier work,[13] these sentence combining processes are designed to enable students to realize and value their sentence producing abilities, not to become convinced

that they do not know their grammar and therefore cannot write. Another technique, sentence modeling, is an imitative method based upon natural learning processes.[14] Semantics enables students to study the ways words influence meaning in a multitude of contexts. Awareness of rhetorical principles enables students to relate their purpose in communicating to the techniques which will produce the desired effects upon their audiences. Onomastics, the study of origins and forms of words, especially names, might prove particularly appealing in areas where interest in geneology is high. Dialect studies enable students to investigate how groups of individuals actually do use language. And, clearly, students need to write and speak as often as is feasible and in a variety of forms.

Does all this mean that teachers do not need to know grammar or that grammar should never be taught? Quite the opposite. To create meaningful language experiences, teachers must know more than one grammar. But they ought not to teach a grammar unless students request it. To facilitate communication, a few simple grammatical terms could easily be taught students early in their education. And some students ought to be allowed to study grammar for its intellectual or aesthetic interest, but not with the pretense that it will improve the students' communication skills. As J.N. Hook recently wrote, "We tried basics for years--at least in the sense of grammatical analysis and usage drill for fifty percent of the time...It didn't work."[15]

Happily, research results have not been totally lost upon English teachers. In the past fifty years, for instance, attitudes toward the teaching of usage have undergone great change. But it has taken fifty years. As Robert C. Pooley noted, "...in one decade, between 1925 and 1935, all the principal documents of the usage movement were written and published."[16] He was referring to Serling Andrus Leonard's The Doctrine of Correctness in English Usage, 1700-1800;

Charles Carpenter Fries' "Rules of the Common School Grammar," published in PMLA; and Pooley's own Grammar and Usage in Textbooks on English, which was later published by NCTE as Teaching English Usage. But it has not been until recently that English teachers have begun to look more rationally at this matter of usage.

Perhaps no other area so well illustrates the basic conservatism of English teachers in general as does the teaching of usage. And perhaps no single example illustrates the absurdity of some English usage distinctions better than does the shall/will distinction. Here we find a distinction that was actually invented in the year 1653 by a mathematician, John Wallis, who reasoned that, since the two words both existed with some similarity in meaning related to futurity, why then there must be a rule clearly delineating when each should be used. And so, for years afterward, serious students had to learn the distinction: If one were indicating simple futurity, he or she used "I shall, you will, he-she-it will, we shall, you will, they will," and if one intended purposeful intent, he or she used "I will, you shall, he-she-it shall, we will, you shall, they shall." If students found that confusing, their confusion was reinforced by grammar books whose authors were not too certain themselves about the correct usage. And now we have the oft told, though apocryphal tale of the Scot who was drowning and who shouted, "I will drown, and no one shall save me." Listeners, we are told, heard him, understood that it was his intention to drown, and so allowed him to. The absurdity of this anecdote is, of course, purposeful. Usage cannot be formed by experts and set in linguistic concrete for all future generations. Usage, like it or not, arises out of the actual use of language by people. In his 1933 work and his revised 1974 book, Pooley explained this quite clearly:

> Good English is that form of speech which is appropriate to the purpose of the speaker, true to the language as it is, and comfortable to speaker and listener. It is the product of custom, neither cramped by rule nor free from all restraint; it is never fixed, but changes with the organic life of the language.[17]

Yet many English teachers indiscriminately continue to teach all usage distinctions that occur in their grammar books. Some items, such as the shall/will distinction, have no right to waste the time of our students. Happily, few teachers insist upon teaching that item today. Other items should only be taught with considerable tempering of judgment. The may/can distinction is one such item. Once, while observing a senior high school class as a member of an evaluation team, I watched a lesson on at least twenty usage items, at the end of which the students were to indicate their understanding of the lesson by circling usage in paired items found in a list of twenty sentences. Wanting to see a copy of the exercises and noting that the young woman across the aisle from me had an extra exercise sheet, I said to her, "Can I have that extra copy, please." She replied, "Sure," without questioning my usage. I watched as she took the test, and when she came to the may/can and might/could distinctions, she circled the usages that her teacher told her were correct. Clearly, students are naturally aware of at least two levels of usage: 1. the level of English class exercise usage and 2. the level of real world usage--language as it is spoken in almost all environments outside of the English class usage exercise.

Actually, students are aware of many levels of usage, and that awareness ought to be at the core of usage studies in the classroom. For example, some years ago, Postman and Weingartner suggested a simple discussion device in their book, Linguistics: A Revolution in Teaching. This device consists of usage situations similar to the following: You are in need of a job. While being interviewed for it, you hear your prospective employer say, "I hope working at night don't bother you." How would you reply? A. No, it don't. B. No, it doesn't. C. No, working at night does not bother me. Or D. Nope, not me. Any of these responses could be justified by students, but they must consider the context of that particular communication act, their purposes in selecting

from a variety of usages, and their awareness of language being essentially a tool used by humans and therefore subject to numerous variations. In my methods classes, I use such exercises as devices for beginning our discussions of usage, as well as quotes from famous literates such as David Brinkley saying, "One of the problems facing Senator Goldwater are his friends." My classes have also written research papers in which they trace the development of a particular usage, examining the pronouncements of grammar textbooks throughout the years as well as the research of scholars; and then they must decide whether or not to teach the usage and justify their decision, including how they would teach the usage if they decide to or, if they decide not to, how they would explain that to a critic, such as a parent or administrator, who felt that the usage should be taught. A revealing exercise for some of my classes has been a survey they conduct of actual usages. They are not allowed to ask people which usage is correct or which usage they would use, for most people are aware of the English class answers. Instead, they must put people in situations where they must employ the particular item. For instance, to check whether a person uses may or can, they might pick up a book that is on reserve in the library and ask the librarian to check it out. They would then record whether the librarian responds with a statement such as: A. You can't check this out, B. You may not check this out, or C. some other type of response avoiding both may and can. After the response is elicited, my students inform the person that they are conducting a survey and ask permission to acquire some biographical data, such as the amount of education the person has had, where the person has lived, and how old he or she is. Once all the usages are correlated with these data, my students must draw their own conclusions about their findings. They have discovered, for instance, that, when the choice is between I and me in the predicate nominative or subjective complement position (e.g., It is I vs. It is me), most high school graduates use the "correct" I, while most college graduates, including and

especially those holding Ph.D.'s, use the "incorrect" me. One class, seeking an answer to this apparent reversal of role usages, discovered that, when speaking to someone they perceived as educated, many high school graduates hypercorrected their usage and used I in a majority of circumstances. Additional readings about this usage issue convinced my students that it was an item hardly worth worrying about these days.

Such findings as these have led to some rather involved and rational discussions about the nature of usage and usage teaching. Then when asked to examine public school textbooks to determine how they treated such usage items, my students have been impressed by the wide range of treatments, from highly descriptive to purely prescriptive, often appallingly so.

I do not know if these usage exercises in my classes have made my students better teachers of English. I do know that they are now more aware that usage is not a clearly prescribed matter, and I know that some of them feel quite strongly one way or the other about the usage items they personally investigated. I hope that, having participated in such informal research, they now realize that such investigations are not difficult, that they do not require a background in educational research and statistical analysis, and that public school students can conduct the same types of research themselves, thus learning more conclusively and in a more involved fashion than they ever would by rote learning from a textbook.

Inductive learning exercises can help pre-service teachers gain an entirely new perspective on the nature of teaching and learning, and, hopefully, be more willing to accept an accumulated body of data, if such exists, before coming to unwarranted decisions which influence their teaching.

To illustrate the latter: perhaps no other set of data has had such a great impact upon the public's opinion toward English teaching as has the continuing

reports by the media of the declining scores on college entrance tests. We now know, thanks to reports in such articles as Newsweek's "Why Johnny Can't Write," that mathematical and verbal scores are down. Verbal scores are interpreted by the public in a variety of ways. Verbal must mean words. Words are the province of English teachers. Therefore English teachers must be doing a poor job. Now, if you spot a fault in syllogistic reasoning there, they you are among a vast minority, including even a minority of English teachers. Verbal scores on such tests measure the verbal abilities that students are expected to acquire in all areas of the curriculum: social studies, mathematics, and the wide range of alternatives that students may elect. The English teacher alone is not to blame. Yet English teachers have adapted a mea culpa attitude--and not just mea culpa, but mea maxima culpa.

One aspect of standardized testing that has been ignored has been the "composition" scores, which, in the SAT, have actually risen in the past few years. Yet English teachers themselves have been convinced that all scores are dropping. The "media blitz" has clearly sacked our classroom quarterbacks. But even in the area called "composition" on standardized tests, we cannot, and indeed, should not claim much credit, for most standardized tests do not actually ask students to write, but simply present them with multiple choice samples of writing that someone else has produced--hardly an adequate measure of the writing process. We can not claim that scoring higher on such a test means that our students write better than they used to. Nor, should the test scores drop, should we admit that our students are now less able to communicate through writing.

In fact, our students may actually be writing worse than ever, but we haven't adequate proof. True, we can cite innumerable examples of faulty writing coming out of our schools. But, as such popularists as Edwin Newman have argued, our professions are filled with apparent corruptions of standard speech. We have

only to listen to people in education talk about "dialoging" to begin to believe that Newman may be right. The most thorough examination of the writing ability of our students has been the national assessment of writing, and its results have been mixed, showing younger students as writing better than before and older students as writing worse than before. But what is this "before?" In fact, only two national assessments have been made, hardly a significant enough number of samples to substantiate the steady decline of students' writing ability.

Researchers at the University of Colorado examined the national assessment writing samples to try to determine what characteristics the best writing samples had which were unique from the other, apparently poorer writing samples. Of all the variables they checked, only one seemed characteristic of the best samples--between sentence trasitions. The writers judged best seemed to use more words such as however, therefore, instead, and first. If the media made this known, I would foresee a vast demand that teachers find ways to teach such words and an increase in deductive exercises requiring students to use such transitions. In fact, all native speakers know those words. But less capable writers tend not to use them. And better writers use such transitions more because they are more aware of the need to guide readers through the writer's thoughts, to provide as many clues as possible to the direction the writer is moving and the inter-relationship of one sentence to another. In order to help student writers acquire such abilities, teachers need to provide more exercises which encourage students to manipulate the variables of audience, purpose, and voice, not to provide more exercises in transitions.

That teachers will substitute direct rote learning of such items as between-sentence transitions for the teaching of writing is a recurring fear of mine, a fear based upon the apparent inability of our schools to accumulate data on their own students and to respond to critics from an informed position. As a result,

educators become victims of every educational fad that comes their way, hoping that this next one will be the cure-all. Why have so many English teachers jumped on the values clarification bandwagon or suddenly swarmed to learn more about moral education when those things have been what good English teachers have concerned themselves with for years when developing student response to literature? Could it be that such educators have been unwilling or unable to ask themslves what their own students can and cannot do?

A revealing report is that of Charlene and A.M. Tibbetts, who visited fifty high schools across the United States to find out how the administrators and teachers were reacting to the reported decline in test scores.[18] One group of administrators believes that the test scores are a true measure of real achievement; another group believes that the scores reflect the abilities of students, not the quality of their education; and a third group does not know what the tests and scores may mean. English teachers tended to dismiss the tests as not measuring what they were teaching and as not measuring what the students actually knew. But most disturbing was the finding that administrators, including counselors, seldom had any real data on whether their students had scored higher or lower on SAT and ACT tests over the years. Most assumed, like the public, that their students were scoring lower because the national scores were lower. And, consequently, many had begun to change their programs to reflect the national concern. It became clear that English teachers were returning to "grammar" and the "basics" without regard to the scores of their students.

My concern for the teaching of grammar, usage, and style; for the relative ignorance that administrators and teachers have of the standardized test results of their students; and for the curricular choices that educators make without gathering pertinent data would not be so great if it were not for the fact that different students learn in different ways. We know, for example, that girls are

no more able to process language than boys are and that the maturing verbal repertoires of children, regardless of socioeconomic class and culture, are potentially equivalent. Nevertheless, environmental factors, including school experiences, may operate against equal language development, and the pressure to "return to basics" may compel teachers to teach all students identically, regardless of cultural and socioeconomic background. If standardized tests tell us anything, it is that lower socioeconomic level students and some cultural groups do more poorly than do middle and upper socioeconomic level students and other cultural groups. In addition to learning more about language development itself, teachers must become more familiar with culturally-determined learning styles.

Some students, for instance, learn better through cooperation than through competition. As Manuel Ramirez III and Alfredo Castañeda have shown in Cultural Democracy, Bicognitive Development, and Education, field dependent students need more support, direction, and personal encouragement than do field independent students. English teachers must become increasingly aware of culturally-determined learning styles so that they can select the types of experiences necessary for best developing the language skills of their students. And they must be aware that research into the linguistic abilities of cultural minorities has often drawn the wrong conclusions by generalizing from inappropriate or selectively limited data, such as attributing linguistic passivity to all Native American students when the samples were actually measurements of rural behavior or of speakers measured in unfamiliar speaking contexts. In this area, earlier research purporting to find "restricted language codes" among lower socioeconomic groups, such as that developed by Basil Bernstein, may well have misled teachers.

Having considered but a few of the complexities which have prevented language research findings from being translated into classroom practice, where can we go from here? First, the current structures of most universities prohibit the

development of programs which will train teachers to become actively involved with language development based upon a foundation of reliable research. Consequently, we need to combine those elements of university departments which have the most to offer the development of effective English teachers, including those who deal with a pluralistic student body. Why not combine the following: the composition section of the English Department, speech teachers, drama instructors, educational psychologists concerned primarily with language development, reading experts, anthropology or sociology of language and education professors, and English methods consultants. Literature courses would then assume their proper, secondary role in the training of effective English language teachers.

But simply offering courses will not train teachers who are both capable of surviving in the public schools as they now exist and who can best develop the language of their students. Earlier in this paper I suggested that teachers may be confused by language research. It should also be clear from what I have said that they would not be so confused if they had the time to examine critically the available research. But the pressures of the public school classroom typically do not promote such a luxury. What is most important is that the pre-service program develop in teachers those behaviors which will enable them to become true professionals, not satisfied with treating all students alike, but always striving to find better ways to develop the language of their students.

Two major obstacles tend to inhibit the production of such teachers. One is the teacher's perception of the teacher's role. University professors often debate whether their role is one of vocational training or professional training. The predeliction of in-service teachers for recipe courses seems to indicate that they see their job as a vocation rather than a profession. As a vocation, a teacher's task is to satisfy the job requirements rather than constantly seek ways to improve and learn more about education. Thus, if a teacher is expected to teach grammatical analysis, that teacher unquestioningly teaches

grammatical analysis. In fact, most pre-service teachers assume that teaching grammatical analysis is automatically part of an English teacher's job.

The second obstacle to producing effective English teachers seems to be a basic suspicion of research that many teachers develop. Research is too often perceived as the domain of the scholar, and therefore many teachers consider it divorced from reality. That research limits variables in order to control validity and reliability does seem to produce research conditions that are highly unlikely to be duplicated in any classroom situation. And because education courses are often taught with the idea of teacher training being vocational training, teachers learn to be mechanics of their trade, capable of substituting parts and following directions, but not trained to be designers of educational experiences.

Three general procedures would help produce English teachers who are designers and not educational mechanics. First, in addition to taking the traditional offerings of theory and methodology classes, teachers must be trained as informal language researchers themselves. Instead of providing English language teachers with only a body of content to learn or collections of activities, teacher preparation institutions must provide opportunities for active involvement with language investigations ranging from case studies to limited language surveys such as the ones I reported in discussing usage to the creation of numerous language forms, such as personal communications, poetry, technical reports, and media presentations. That in-service teachers do not understand the nature of research might best be illustrated by a graduate student who, as a project for my language development course, chose to administer the DOVE Counterbalance Black Dialect Test to a group of blacks and whites in Salt Lake City. This test measures one's comprehension of urban black argot. Theoretically, the white subjects should have failed the test, while the black subjects should have passed it. As it turned out, all subjects, black as well as white, failed it.

This result was very revealing, but because the result did not match the expected outcome, my student felt that the experiment had been a failure.

Second, in order to increase the methodological flexibility of their students, teacher educators should require varieties of lessons designed to accomplish identical objectives. Any given lesson may not work for all students. Only be selecting from a repertoire of techniques, from inductive to deductive, from close-ended to open-ended, can teachers best work toward improving their students' language competencies. They will be willing and able to modify their techniques when their classroom observations indicate that such change is warranted. The emphasis upon flexibility can be reinforced by similar requirements during the student teaching experience. By feeling confident that they can use a variety of techniques, teachers may be more willing to read in their field to discover new approaches, may be less subject to fads, and may require fewer in-service workshops or at least fewer sessions of the recipe variety.

Of utmost importance, teacher training programs must require language production in as many and varied ways as may be efficacious. By learning to manipulate language themselves, teachers will become more aware of language processes, and their lessons will take on new dimensions of meaning for their students. Students who have been in my creative writing courses were more appreciative of and had greater insights into literature than students who had not attempted creative writing. Teachers who themselves write, to make my analogy, have much more to offer students for they are aware of the realistic needs of the writing act.

What I am asking is that we produce a professional educator, one who can translate research findings into classroom practices. Such an educator must be willing to change or modify techniques when research findings warrant such change. To produce such teachers, training institutes must provide a problem-solving environment, one which challenges the intellect of the pre-service teacher.

Inevitably, teachers must become informal researchers in their own classrooms,[19] continually testing and revising new methods and materials as students and environmental factors change. In her article, "What the 'Good Language Learner' Can Teach us,"[20] Joan Rubin observed that the good language learner was willing to appear foolish, was willing to guess, and attended to meaning. Those are admirable qualities for all teachers to foster in their students. They are admirable qualities for the teacher to possess. Rubin came to her conclusions after observing students. By a similar process, Mina Shaughnessey's careful observation of students and their work resulted in her insightful and revealing work, Errors and Expectations.[21] The quality of having an open, inquiring mind must be a trait of a truly professional teacher.

Ideally, teacher training institutes need to provide the conditions for such traits to develop and to eliminate those students who cannot meet the standards. As Brossell noted, learning is primary--education secondary.[22]

FOOTNOTES

[1]Gordon Brossell, "Developing Power and Expressiveness in the Language Learning Process," in The Teaching of English, ed.: James R. Squire (Chicago, Ill.: The University of Chicago Press, 1977), p. 45.

[2]Melvin J. Luthy, "Why Transformational Grammar Fails in the Classroom," Composition and Communication 28 (December, 1977): 355.

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